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The Faithful Stewardship.

A
S E R M O N
P R E A C H ' D before the
S O N S of the **C L E R G Y**,
A T T H E I R
A N N I V E R S A R Y M E E T I N G
I N T H E
C A T H E D R A L - C H U R C H
O F
S t . **P A U L**,
December 10. 1719.

By **JOSEPH SMITH**, D.D. Rector
of *S. Dionys Back-Church*, and Lectur-
er of *Trinity Chappel*.

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The Fund in Honour of
 SERMON
 Preached before the
 SONS of the CLERGY
 AT THEIR
 ANNUAL MEETING
 THE
 CATHEDRAL CHURCH



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BY JOSEPH SMITH D.D. Rector
 of St. Paul's Cathedral, and Lecturer
 at Trinity College

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T O

The Reverend *Henry Sacheverell*, D. D.
The Reverend *Michael Hutchinson*, D. D.
The Reverend Mr. *John Rogers*, B. D.
The Reverend Mr. *Tho. Lamplugh*, M. A.

And to the Worthy

Francis Drewe Esq;

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Mr. Philip Robinson. } *Mr. Robert Ward.*

STEWARDS

For the late FEAST of the

SONS of the CLERGY,

THIS

SERMON

PREACH'D and PRINTED

At Their Request,

Is DEDICATED,

By their most Affectionate and

Humble Servant,

Joseph Smith.

The Reverend Henry Jackson, D.D.
The Reverend Michael Hutchins, D.D.
The Reverend Mr. John Rogers, F.R.
The Reverend Mr. The Langley, M.A.

And to the worthy

Thomas Henry Jones Esq.
Charles West Esq.
Mr. Richard Goodson
Mr. John Parker
Mr. Robert Wood

STEWARDS

For the use of the

SONS of the CLERGY

STERN

Printed and Published

At the Press

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By the most ABBOTS and

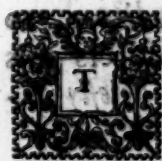
Humble Servants

Joseph Smith



I COR. iv. 2.

*Moreover it is required in
Stewards, that a Man be
found faithful.*



THESE Words, if taken singly by themselves, imply the general Obligation of the Office of a Steward, in † whomsoever 'tis invested; that as there is a Trust repos'd in the Persons that bear it; so they ought to be strictly Faithful, and Just in its Discharge.

And this is a Qualification so necessarily included in the very Name of a Steward, that whether it be taken in a Civil, or Spiritual Meaning, it holds good to them Both, and in Both is requir'd: Though the Latter only as the Sense in which 'tis here to be understood,

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and This too limited, and restrain'd by the *Context* to a more *Definite* Application.

The Word *Stewardship*, in its Spiritual, or Scriptural Acceptation, is usually consider'd under a *Twofold View*; either as it relates, 1st, to the *Gifts*, and *Talents*, or *Endowments* of Men in their *General Capacity*: Or, 2^{dly}, to the *Personal Characters*, *Functions*, or *Offices*, which some Men, above Others, are invested with, for the Service, and Edification of God's Church, and People, or the Publick Benefit of Civil Government, and Society.

But as the Words of my Text bear an Immediate Relation to the Foregoing Verse, which restrains this *Stewardship* to the Spiritual *Ministry* of the *Apostles*, and their *Successors*, (a Subject I judge more suitable to the Principal Part of this *Eminent Audience*, to whom I have the Honour to address this Discourse) I shall treat of them chiefly under that *Definite Sense*, and consider,

I. The great Authority, and Importance of this Spiritual *Stewardship*, as it relates to the *Clergy*, and,

II. The strict Obligation it brings upon Those, who are entrusted with it, to be conscientiously *Faithful*, and just in its Discharge.

And then, that I may make my Discourse the more generally useful, I shall touch likewise,

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III. Upon the General Import of the Word *Steward*, as it may properly be apply'd, 1st, to the *Laity* in their *Relative State*, consider'd as Such; and, 2^{dly}, to the *Laity* in common with the *Clergy*; and that with a more Immediate and Particular View to the *Present Solemnity*.

The first Point then that offers itself to our Consideration, is the great *Authority* and *Importance* of this *Spiritual Stewardship*; as it relates to the *Clergy*, whom the *Apostle* here charges the *Corinthians* so to account of; as the *Ministers of Christ*, and *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*. Characters that imply a very *High Commission*, and a very *Great and Momentous Employment*; and that both in respect of the *Person* that gives it, and the *Subject Matter* 'tis to be exercis'd upon.

The *Commission* is vested in them by no less *Person* than *Christ the Son of God*, who is himself over all *God Blessed for ever*, and *Rom. ix. 5.* whose *Sovereignty* therefore transcends all *Humane Authorities, Principalities, and Powers*, as far as *Heaven* does the *Earth*, or *Eternity Time*. And the more *Excellent* the *Person* from whom the *Commission* is deriv'd, the *Higher* sure, and more *Honourable* must the *Dignity* of it be.

The Word *Ministers*, which in this Place is but another Name for *Ambassadors of Christ*,

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bespeaks a mighty Eminence of Power and Esteem, far beyond what that *Character* in a *Civil Capacity* can entitle Men to. And that of *Stewards*, or *Dispensers of the Mysteries of God*, is of equal Authority, and Dignity with the other.

For the Office of a *Steward*, even in a *Temporal Sense*, implies a great Power and Trust in the *Family* he presides over. He has a Charge, a Superintendency, and Command over his Fellow-Servants, to regulate their Behaviour, and to assign each of them their due Share both of Labour and Provision; and ought therefore to be Honour'd and Respected by them.

1 Tim. v.
17.

Mat. xxiv.
45.

Of what double Honour then are they to be accounted worthy, who are appointed *Stewards and Rulers over that Spiritual Household*, of which *Christ is the Head*, whose Conversation they are to watch over, whose Works of Duty they are to direct, and whose Portions of Spiritual Nourishment, from the *Bread of Eternal Life*, they are severally to dispense. All which, as it shews the Power and Dignity of this *Commission*; so does it, -
-ally, The Excellency and Sublimity of the *Subjects* is to be exercis'd upon, which is here express'd in general by the *Mysteries of God*, i. e. the *Mysteries* of his *Word*, his *Sacraments*, and his *Sanctions*, for the Edifying of his *Church*, and the Salvation of *Souls*.

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Princes and Magistrates have indeed a great Power and Authority lodg'd in *Them*, and that too from *God*. But it reaches no farther than to the Security of the *Bodies* and *Estates* of Men, the Enacting and Enforcing of *Temporal* Laws and Statutes for the Administration of *Justice*, and the Peace and Prosperity of the *Civil Government*.

And what Proportion do these Things bear to the Safety of the *Soul*, the Peace of the *Conscience*, and the Stability of *Christ's Kingdom*? Can the Publication of *Humane Edicts* be thought of Equal Importance with the Preaching of the *Divine Word*, by which the *Eternal* Laws and Decrees of *Heaven* are unfolded? Can the Administring of *Justice*, to secure Mens *Civil Properties*, vie Excellence with the Administration of the *Sacraments* of *Christ's Church*, for the conferring of *Grace*? Or can *Humane Sanctions* be compar'd to the Power of *Absolving* and *Remitting* of *Sins*, of promising *Peace* and *Pardon* in *Christ's Name* to the *Penitent*, and denouncing *Future Judgments* to the *Disobedient* and *Unbelieving*? No; these things are too unequal to be put in the same Scale; they are as widely distant as * *Spiritual* and *Carnal*, (or *Tem-*

* V. Chrys. de Sacerd. Lib. 3. Ἰερῶν ὄντων ἢ περὶ καμίας, ἢ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις βασιλείας ἔσται, ὅσον Πνεύματος καὶ Σαρκὸς τὸ μέτρον, &c.

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poral.) And the Comparison indeed is so shocking, that 'tis scarce possible for Christians, who have not sinn'd away the Sense of God and their Religion, to entertain a Thought of it.

And yet so Loose are Mens Notions in this *Free-thinking* Age, that I am apprehensive, while I am speaking of the *Authority* of the *Priesthood*, and the *Sublimity* of its *Functions*, I may be thought too much by some to magnify my Office, and too much perhaps to derogate from that of the *Civil Magistrate*.

But I may be pardon'd, I hope, when I explain myself, (as it will be expected I should) by making a very just and necessary *Distinction* between the *Persons*, and their *Function*, between a *Superiority* in *pure Spirituals*, and a *Superiority* in *Civil and Temporal Affairs*.

That the *Persons* of the *Clergy* are equally under the *Power* and *Authority* of their *Prince* with the rest of the *People*; that an equal *Honour* and *Allegiance* is due from them to his *Crown*, and an equal *Obedience* and *Subjection* to his *Laws*, is what None of that Order presume to deny: They must fly in the Face of their Profession when they do it.

It must likewise be granted, that as the *Power* of exercising an *Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction* in the *Government* of the Church is deriv'd also from the *Sanctions* of the *Civil*

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Authority, by which even our Church itself was first establish'd; so in that Respect too, as well as the Other, the Clergy scruple not to own their Inferiority, and to submit themselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake. 1 Pet. ii. 13.

All the Authority they claim, Superior to, and Independent on the State, is with a special Regard to those Acts only that are purely Spiritual, viz. the Acts of Ordaining, Confirming, and Consecrating in the Bishops; and the Acts of Dispensing God's Word, and Sacraments, of Blessing, Interceding, and Absolving in Christ's Name, which the whole Priesthood in general have an equal Right to the Exercise of.

And that this is a Right Peculiar to Them, Exclusive of all Others, is evident not only from the proper Import of the Words now explain'd, but from the whole Tenor of Christ's Gospel, and the End of his INSTITUTIONS.

For to whom did Christ deliver that special Commission recorded by S. Matthew, *Go ye, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? And to whom did he address himself, when he elsewhere says, Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retain'd?* Were not both these Powers immediately deliver'd to the Apostles themselves, Matt. xxviii. 19. Jo. xx. 23.

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selves, and in them to their Successors through all Future Generations?

Mat.
xxviii.
20.

How else could that Solemn Promise, which is annex'd to the Former, of Christ's being *with them to the End of the World*, be verify'd and fulfill'd? How else could the Institutions of his *Word* and *Sacraments* be regularly dispens'd, or the Government and Edification of *his Church* promoted? His *Apostles* were but *Men*, and to die therefore as such, and most of them much sooner than the Course of Nature would allow. And what then must become of these several *Ministrations*, when Nature, or Violence, put an end to their Lives?

Must every Man take upon him to be a *Priest* to himself? Or, must all those, who should pretend to be *Gifted in Spirituals*, assume a Liberty to *teach*, and *minister* therein to Others? This would have been breaking in upon those plain Rules of the Apostle, that

Heb. v. 4. *No man can take this Honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron;* and that

Rom. x.
15. *None can preach, except they be sent.* It would confound all the Notions of Order, and Distinction in Christ's Church, and we should have as many Religions, as there are different Heads, and Ways of Thinking in the World.

But must *Christ's Church* and *Kingdom* on Earth then be dissolv'd, and no Others commission'd in *his Name* and *Stead* to discharge this weighty Function? *God forbid.* His Care and Concern for the Being of *his Church*,
and

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and the Execution of his *Laws*, is as Unchangeable as Himself, *the same Yesterday, today, and for ever.*

And to this Purpose we are assur'd, that before he *ascended up on High*, he appointed not only *Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists*; but a continued Succession of *Pastors* Ephes. iv. 12, 13. also, and *Teachers*, for the *Perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, and for the Edifying of the Body of Christ, till we shall all come, in the Unity of his Spirit, to be made Perfect in Him, Perfect in Faith, and Perfect in Glory.*

I might here farther enlarge (if the Hour would allow it) upon the *Certainty* of this *Succession*, and the *Regularity* of it, from the constant Practice of the Church in all Ages. I might likewise insist upon the *Singular Authority* the *Clergy* alone have to minister in *Things Spiritual*, and contribute my Mite toward the Exploding the Pernicious Notions that have been of late but too popularly advanc'd, against their claiming that *Authority*, and the Efficacy of their *Benedictions*, and *Absolutions* in Christ's Name.

But these Notions having been so strenuously, and judiciously confuted by much *Abler Pens*, and the *Authors* of them push'd so far, till they have scarce any thing left to screen them but *Sophistry* and *Prevarication*, which always answers itself, I hasten to the next General Head of my Discourse, to

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which

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which the main Drift of my Text is more immediately directed, viz.

II. The strict Obligation which this *Stewardship* brings on Those, who are entrusted with it, to be conscientiously *Faithful* and Just in its Discharge.

In treating of which, if I happen to be led into any *Freedom of Speech*, which might better perhaps become One of a *Superior Rank*, and Authority in the Church, I bespeak the Candor of my *Brethren* for a favourable Construction of it; that they would take it (as 'tis truly meant) not in the Way of an *Authoritative Instruction*, but as a *Seasonable Memento* of the Importance of their Office, and the Fidelity it requires.

Luke xii. 48. 'Tis a just and remarkable Sentence of our Saviour's, that *Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.* And 'tis in no Case more applicable, than in This now before us. For as the *Stewardship* of the *Ministry* is of all Others the most Noble and Important; so there's a greater Number and Measure of *Endowments* requir'd to qualify Men for it.

There's a Foundation of *Arts and Sciences* to be laid in the *Schools of the Prophets*, and a Competency of *Natural Parts* and *Endowments* suppos'd to enable them to raise the Superstructure of *Divine Knowledge* to such

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a Degree of Perfection, as to *Teach* Others in it. There must be a Readiness of *Apprehension* to discern the Truth, and a Fidelity of *Memory* to retain due Notions of it; a Solidity of *Judgment* to explain and unfold it, and a Dexterity of *Argument* to prove and enforce it. There must be a Propriety of *Language* to express, of *Eloquence* to persuade, of *Prudence* to direct, and of *Industry*, and *Zeal*, to apply all to Practice. And, what is above all these, there is a more especial Gift of the *Spirit of Grace* conferr'd on them at their Ordination to this *Sacred Office*, which they are strictly requir'd to improve to *Edification*, lest they incur the heavy Guilt of receiving it in vain. 1 Tim. iv. 14, &c.

The Former indeed are *Talents* which do seldom all center in One and the Same Person: But as 'tis every *Pastor's* Duty to endeavour the Attainment of them, and come as near them as he can; so wherever they are, or in whatsoever Degree, they bring *Each* of them their several Obligations upon these *Stewards*, with Fidelity to employ them to the great Ends of *Religion* in the several Parts and Branches of their Duty.

They are, 1. To be *Faithful* to the *People* in the Ministrations of their Office; 2. *Faithful* to *Christ's Church* in its Support and Defence; and, 3. *Faithful* to *Themselves*, and their *Sacred Character*, in adorning their Doctrine by the Regularity of their Lives. And,

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1st, They are to be *Faithful* to the *People* in the Ministrations of their Office. The *Public Prayers* of the Church, as they are the Purest and Best Standard of *Primitive Devotion* that ever was compos'd; so they bespeak a Spirit of *Zeal* and *Piety* in the Reading of them; such as may communicate a like Spirit to the *People* that attend them, and warm and enliven their Hearts in God's Worship.

And the Service of the *Altar* is yet to be more *Spiritual*. 'Tis the Noblest and most Elevated Office of *Divine Worship*, that the *Priest* can perform, or the *People* partake of. With what an *Awe* then, and *Reverence*, should He that *ministers* therein approach the *Table of the Lord*? To what a Pitch of *Devotion* should his Heart be rais'd in *Consecrating* the Sacred Elements of *Christ's Body and Blood*? And how Gravely and Solemnly should he *Administer* them to the *People*, to inspire them with a like *Reverence* in the Receiving of them, and engage them to offer up the true *Sacrifice* of their *Souls*, that they may be entitled to the glorious *Benefits* of the Great *Sacrifice*, they commemorate?

And then for the Duty of the *Pulpit*, tho' 'tis not of Equal Excellence with the *Ordinances* now mention'd; yet it calls for great *Abilities*, and great Efforts of *Zeal*, and *Prudence* to fulfill it. The true and *Faithful Pastor* is not to accommodate his *Doctrines* to the *Times*, to wrest and disguise the *Scriptures* in favour of a *Party*, or model them to the

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Humours and Vices of *Great Men*, for the Sake of *Advancement*: But with the utmost Sincerity, Perspicuity, and Exactness, *rightly* 2 Tim. ii. 15. to divide, and expound the *Word of Truth*; to keep back nothing of what is given him in Charge to deliver, but unreservedly to declare the *Whole Counsel of God*. Nor is he Acts xx. 27. only to lay open, and explain Christ's Doctrines, but to urge, and enforce them with such Evident *Proofs*, such Convincing *Arguments*, as their most Obstinate *Adversaries* Luke xxi. 15. shall not be able justly to gainsay, or resist.

And farther, that *Mens Conversation*, as well as their *Faith*, may be agreeable to Christ's Gospel, He is accurately to State the *Bounds* of every *Grace* and every *Vertue*, as they fall under his Consideration, to obviate the Several *Scruples* and *Difficulties* rais'd about them, and with all the Justness of *Thought* and Elegance of *Expression*, that he is indeed Master of, to apply and strike them home to the *Affections* of his *Hearers*, and awaken, and persuade each, in their different Capacities, to reduce them to *Practice*.

But besides These, there are some other *Occasional Duties* that attend the *Cure of Souls*, which require much Discretion, and Discernment of Mind, as well as the most resolute, and unwearied Application. The *Sick* are to be visited, the *Scrupulous* satisfy'd, the *Weak* supported, and the *Fallen* rais'd; the *Stray'd* are to be reduc'd, the *Wavering* confirm'd, and those that are at *Variance* re-

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concil'd to Each Other. To all which, proper Remedies are severally to be administer'd, and proper Cautions, Exhortations, and Reproofs too apply'd.

And yet so Different are the Inclinations; so Inconstant the Tempers of the Generality of Mankind, that almost every Single Person is to be address'd to, and dealt with in a Method peculiar to the Circumstances he is under. All which, as it shews the Difficulty of this Spiritual Stewardship; so does it likewise the Obligations of being Faithful in its Discharge, by following the Example of that great Apostle S. Paul, who tells us in

1 Cor. ix.
22.

the like Case, that he became all Things to all Men, that he might by all means save some. But, 2dly, The Clergy are not only to be Faithful in the Ministrations of their Office; but Faithful to Christ's Church in its Support and Defence; in Maintaining the Publick Honour and Interest of it against the Teaderies and Impostures of its Pretended Friends; as well as the Open Assaults of its more profess'd Enemies, who aim at nothing less than Subverting its Establishment, and Rooting up the very Foundations of Christianity itself.

The Church of Christ, consider'd in its Militant State, has never yet been free from the Snares and Attacks of Ill-designing Men; and never was it more Openly Expos'd to them than at Present. And therefore, as its Enemies are always Active, and Industrious to

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Supplant it ; so should the *Clergy*, (who, under the Divine Providence, are appointed its *Guardians*) exert the Utmost of their *Vigilance*, and *Zeal* in its *Support*.

They are to labour in God's *Husbandry*, the Field of his *Church*, and watch over, and cultivate the *Good Seed* he has sown in it ; lest the *Enemy* come, and mingle it with *Tares*, and disappoint him of the *Harvest* he expects to reap from it. They are not, like *Hirelings*, to shrink, and flee away, when the *Wolf* approaches ; but, like good *Shepherds*, to stand in the Gap against all the *Invaders* of this *Spiritual Fold*, and guard their *Flocks* from being devour'd by the *Beasts of the Forest*, even at the Hazard of their *Lives*. *Mat. xii. 24, 25.*

In a word, They must be continually *Wrestling* against the *Malice* and *Fury*, the *Fraud* and *Subtilty* of their *Earthly*, as well as their *Infernal* *Enemies*; and amidst all the *Encroachments* of *Licentiousness* and *Profaneness*, all the *Storms* of *Heresy* and *Schism* in the *Church*, and all the *Concussions* of *Sedition* in the *State*, must maintain their *True Principles* Firm and Unshaken, even tho' they lie *First* in the *Way* to suffer, and smart for them.

For this 'tis highly necessary, that they should be accoutred with the whole *Armour of God*, the *Shield of Faith*, the *Helmet of Salvation*, and the *Sword of the Spirit* ; that they may be able to stand against the *Wiles* of the *Devil*, and quench all the *Fiery Darts* of the *Wicked*. *Eph. vi. 11 16, 17.*

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ed, that are level'd against the Church, the Sanctuary of God. But,

3dly, To make this *Spiritual Armour* yet more compleat, they are, above all, to be vested with the *Breast-Plate of Righteousness*, an Exemplary Piety, and Unspotted Conversation. They are to be *Faithful to Themselves*, and their *Sacred Character*, in adorning their *Doctrine* by the Regularity of their *Lives*.

vers. 14.

For without this, as *They* are too justly and deservedly expos'd to the Censure, Contempt, and Despight of the *People*, as well as to the severe Lashes and Reproaches of their Own *Conscience*; so they can never hope for that Efficacy, and Success in their *Ministry*, as will either answer the End of their being *Call'd* into *Christ's Vineyard*, or entitle them to any Other Return of their *Labours*, than their being condemn'd as *Wicked, and Unprofitable Servants*.

Mat. xxv.
130.

For this Reason the *Faithful Minister, and Steward of Christ's Mysteries*, (of which 'tis to be hop'd, there are much greater Numbers than the common Cry will allow) considering Himself, as a Person *set apart* from the *World*, and more immediately *Dedicated* to the Service of *God*, his *Church*, and his *Altar*; resolves to tie himself up, not only to a Higher *Decorum* in his *Outward* Deportment, but to a greater *Strictness* and *Regularity* of Life, than the *Common Rank* of *Christians* oblige themselves to.

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He endeavours, as much as possible, to bring his *Passions* and *Appetites* under Subjection to his *Reason*, and his *Reason* entirely to the *Obedience of Faith*; and by the Exercise of *Self-Denial*, and *Contempt of the World*, to maintain his *Sacred Character* so pure and undefil'd, as not only to give no Offence, that the *Ministry* be not blam'd; but so effectually ^{2 Cor. vi. 3.} to recommend himself to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God, as to be able to say, ^{2 Cor. iv.} in the Language of the Apostle, that his ^{Phil. iii. 20.} Conversation is in Heaven.

In short, he makes his *Practice* correspondent to the Divinity of his *Profession*; and tho' he lives in, and deals, and converses with the World, yet keeps himself *Unspotted*, and disentangled from it. So that amidst all the Prevalence of its Corrupt *Modes* and *Customs* on ^{Jam. 1. 12.} the One Hand, and the Imputations of *Singularity* and *Want of Breeding* on the Other, he holds fast the *Profession of his Faith* without *Wavering*, and is advancing still Higher ^{Heb. x. 23.} in his *Spiritual Progress*, till he brings it to Perfection, to the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.

This is the true Pattern of the *Faithful Pastor's Life*, which all, who bear that Character, should endeavour (as far as Infirmities will allow) to imitate, and copy after; by striving earnestly to shine forth as *Lights in the World*; by reducing the several *Graces* and *Virtues* They recommend to Others into *Habits* in Themselves; and by *Living*

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up to what they *Preach*, as well as *Preaching* what they *Believe*.

From this View of the Qualifications of a *Faithful Minister*, and the several Branches of Duty he is oblig'd to discharge, the Apostle's Question may very *justly* be put,
 2 Cor. ii. 16. *Who is Sufficient for these Things?* And it may as *justly* be answer'd, that *None* of us, in the utmost *Strictness*, and *Equality* of the Obligation, (as some of the * *Primitive Fathers* have acknowledg'd of themselves) can pretend to be so.

Acts. xiv. 25. We are *Men of Like Passions*, and *Infirmities*, with *Others*, and live in a *Crooked and Perverse Generation*, that are *Deaf* to our *Counsels*, and *Despise* our *Reproofs*. We meet with many *Allurements* to draw us from our *Duty*, and many *Difficulties* and *Discouragements* in the due Discharge of it. We have *Calumnies* and *Reproaches* in Return for all our *Labours*, and create almost as many *Enemies* by telling them the *Truth*, as *Others* do *Friends* by flattering them in their *Errors*.

But none of these Things are to deter us from our *Duty*; nor is it reasonable they should. For however *Insufficient* we may be of *Ourselves* for this *High and Weighty Function*; yet if we in Earnest discharge it to the *Utmost* of our *Power*, we have the *Promise* of *Christ's Spirit* both to *help our Infirmities*, and to *work, to minister, to edify*

* V. Greg. Naz. Apol. 1. and Chrys. de Sacerd. Lib. 6.

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together with us for the Salvation of Souls. And what greater *Sufficiency* can we expect, ^{2 Cor. ix. 5.} or desire, than that which *is of God*?

The Work of *Conversion* depends not solely on the Force of our own *Abilities*, on the Flowers of *Rhetorick*, the Accuracy of *Style*, or the Strength of *Human Arguments*. But 'tis the Power of *God's Word*, and the Influence of his *Grace*, on which we are to found our Chief Hopes of Success. So that, if we *faithfully* do Our Part in the Discharge of our Office, We have nothing else to do, but to leave the Issue to the Wise *Counsel*, and Appointment of *God*, who Alone has the *Hearts of Men* in his Disposal, and models, and turns them just as he pleases.

Nor ought the Ungrateful Returns, or *Ill Treatment*, we meet with, to be any more discouraging, than our *Inabilities* are, for the *Stewardship* that is assign'd us. We ought, with *Patience*, to bear the *Wounds* and *Reproaches* we receive in the *Cause of Religion*; and tho' we are allow'd, for our own Safety, to join the *Wisdom of the Serpent* to the *Inno-* ^{Mat. x. 16.} *cence of the Dove*; yet it behoves us with all *Boldness* to rebuke the Growth of *Vice*, *Infidelity*, and *Error*, and to rejoice we are count- ^{Ads. v. 41.} *ed worthy to suffer Shame for Christ's Name*.

The Apostles, and Primitive Fathers, had much greater Trials of Persecution brought upon them, than we can any of us complain of. And yet, in Obedience to their Lord, who himself was made Perfect through Suf-

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ferings, they undauntedly fought the good
 2 Tim. iv. *Fight of Faith*, and were ready to Spend,
 7. *and be Spent for the People*; tho' the more
 2 Cor. xii. *they lov'd them, the less they were below'd*, nay
 15. the more indeed hated, and abus'd by them.

Let us then, who have the Honour to suc-
 ceed them in their Ministry, be content to
 succeed them in the Discouragements that at-
 tend it. And tho' we should indeed meet
 with no other Return, than *Evil for Good,*
and Hatred for our Good-Will; tho' our Cha-
 racter be insulted, our Counsels despis'd, and
 our Reproofs resented; yet let the Great
 Work we are engag'd in, the *Salvation of*
Souls, prevail with us, after their Example,
 to persevere in it to the End; as being firmly
 persuaded, that if we approve Ourselves, as
 They did, *faithful Ministers of Christ*, we shall
 Gal. vi. 9. be sure in *due time to reap, if we faint not.*

Having thus far consider'd the Words of
 my Text in their limited Sense, as apply'd to
 the Clergy, I proceed now to the last Gene-
 ral Head I propos'd, viz.

III. To consider the General Import of
 the Word *Steward*, as it may properly
 be apply'd; 1st, to the *Laitie* in their
 Relative State, consider'd as such; and,
 2dly, to the *Laitie* in common with the
 Clergy; and that with a more Imme-
 diate and Particular View to the Pre-
 sent Solemnity.

1st, The

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1st, The immediate Relation the *Clergy* bear to God, whose *Ambassadors* they are, the High Importance of the *Offices* they are employ'd in, and the *Qualifications* also requisite for the Execution of them, do so forcibly challenge a *Reverence* and *Esteem*, that even the *Pagan Infidelity* is not able to withstand it. What Refuge, what Shadow of Excuse then can the *Neglect* of it be allow'd in a Christian Country, and in a *Church* too, where the *Sun of Righteousness* has so long shone forth in his full *Brightness*, and display'd a *Law*, and a *Worship* of the greatest Purity and Perfection?

The Ambassador of a *Prince* is confessedly entitl'd to all the highest Marks of *Honour* and *Respect*, that is due to the Crown'd Head he is Commission'd to represent. And shall not the *Ambassadors of Christ*, who is the *Sovereign Lord, and Head over all things to his Church*, claim a like Equitable *Regard* to the Character they sustain? 'Tis unquestionably due to Them in their *Publick Capacity*, how Mean-soever They may appear in their *Personal Qualifications*. And the *Honour of God Himself* is so directly concern'd in it, that as he denounc'd several *Judgments* against the Contemners of his *Priests* and *Prophets* under the *Law*; so our Saviour tells his Apostles, that *they that despis'd Them, despis'd Him; and They that despise Him, despise God that sent Him.*

Ephes. i. 22.

Luke x. 16.

Not that I am here pleading for any ex-
traor-

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traordinary Marks of *Outward* Honour and Obeisance, the Ceremonious Respect of the Hat, or the Knee. For as their *Calling* and their *Message* is *Heavenly*, and *Spiritual*; so the *Reverence* due to them, is suppos'd to be of the like Nature. It is to be evidenc'd chiefly by Thinking and Speaking *honourably* of the *Dignity* of their Vocation, by attending *diligently* to the Purport of the *Doctrines* they deliver, and the *Rites* they perform, and *bringing forth the Fruits thereof with Thanksgiving*.

Let the *Lainy* then take Heed, amidst all the unhappy *Prejudices* they have entertain'd against the *Priesthood*, that they distinguish rightly between the *Persons*, and their Office; and that whilst they allow themselves the Liberty of censuring, and inveigling against the *Ignorance*, or the *Immorality*, of some *Few* of that Order, they don't strike at the *Function* itself through their Sides, and by degrees contract a *Prejudice* against the *Exercise* of it too; defeat themselves of the *Means of Grace*, that are administred thereby, and draw down the heavy Judgment of *Apostacy* upon their Heads.

But I hope Better Things of those among You, to whom this Discourse is more immediately directed. *Mal. i. 6.* A Son honours his Father even in his *Natural* Capacity; how much more should You Yours in that *Spiritual* One of the Church? Can You forget the *Rock* out of which you are hewn? Or vilify the *Root* and

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and Stem, from which you are sprung up? This is such a base and monstrous Sort of *Ingratitude*, as I can hardly suppose You capable of being guilty of, and shall therefore pass on to the

2d Relative Duty incumbent on the *Lai-ty* with regard to the *Clergy*, and that is to *Edify*, and *Profit* under their several *Ministrations*. For Both their *Stewardships*, in this Respect, are mutually obliging. As the *Pastor* is to be *faithful* in sowing the Seed of *God's Word* in their Hearts; so are *They* also to receive, and keep, and cultivate it, with *Fidelity*, that it may bring forth *Fruit* in proportion to the *Soil* it lights upon, and increase, and grow up to *Maturity*, and *Perfection*.

And the like might be observ'd of all the other Parts of the *Ministerial Office*, if I had Time to go through them. For, to what End has God empower'd the *Clergy* to *Bless* in his Name, and *Absolve* Men from their Sins, but that *They* may be *Clean's'd*, and *Sanctify'd*, and *Justify'd* in his Sight? Or, to what Purpose has He appointed *Them* to build up his *Church*, but that the *People* may be *Fellow-Labourers* together with them for their *Edification* and *Salvation*.

So that if the *Lai-ty* don't do their Parts, in answering the mighty Benefits and Privileges they enjoy under their *Spiritual Ministry*, their *Pastor's Fidelity* will but aggravate their *Crimes*, and make them more inexcusable.

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2 Cor. ii. 15. *fable.* The Principal Effect 'tis design'd to produce is the *Salvation* of their Souls; but, if it meets not with *That*, it will work their *Condemnation*. For *we are unto God*, says the Apostle, *as a sweet-smelling Savour, both in Them that are sav'd, and in Them that perish.*

How greatly then does it behove You, for your *Own Sakes*, as well as *Theirs*, to praise and admire God's Wisdom and Goodness in making them the *Stewards* of his Grace and Mercy to You, to receive thankfully the Divine *Treasures*, and *Talents* they offer You, and to discharge that *Spiritual Stewardship* You are entrusted with on *Your Part*, by *Managing* and *Improving* it to your own *Eternal Interest*?

Those especially among You, who have had the Happiness to be *Born*, and *Bred up* under their *Roof*, under the Wings of their *Authority*, and the Influence of their *Instructions*, ought to esteem it as a *Disgrace*, and *Dishonour* to your *Extraction*, either to deviate from the *Sound Principles* They so early instill'd, or degenerate from the *Piety* They endeavour'd to form in You. What a *Just Regard* ought You to have for their *Several Ministrations*, by which both the *Blessings of Grace*, and the *Blessings of Providence*, were first deriv'd on You? And what a *Reproach* and *Imprecation* do you bring upon *Yourself*, if, now you are come abroad into the *World*, You turn your *Backs upon*, or neglect

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neglect to Profit under them. I could willingly expatiate much farther on this Head; but that the Immediate Occasion and Design of this *Meeting* calls upon me in the last place, 2dly, To apply the several Obligations of that Common *Stewardship*, which both *Clergy* and *Laity* are equally concern'd in, for the *Mutual* Benefit and Comfort of *One Another*; especially of this *Honourable* and well *Regulated Society*, of which we are Members.

We have All of us some *Gifts*, some *Talents*, or Other, bestow'd on us by God to profit *withal*; and they are severally distributed, *One after this Manner*, and *Another after that*, for the Ends of *Society*, as well as *Religion*. The *Gifts*, whether of *Nature*, of *Grace*, or of *Fortune*, bring Each of them their several Ties of *Fidelity* along with them; and according to the various Ranks and Conditions of Mankind, oblige them to contribute to that Common *Treasury* of Good Works, of which we are all *Stewards*.

The *Natural* Endowments of a Vivacity of *Parts*, a Quickness of *Apprehension*, a Solidity of *Judgment*, and a Fidelity of *Memory*, as they qualify Men for the Attainment of very great Accomplishments of Wisdom, and Learning, and Knowledge; so they oblige them to great *Fidelity* in the due Employment of them. They Spread a mighty *Power* and *Influence* round about them, and, if rightly directed, become a Publick *Blessing* both to Church and State; especially

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where

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where they are accompany'd with the Gifts of *Divine Grace*, which disposes and directs them all to the Manifestation of God's Glory.

Nay the least *Degrees* of these Gifts, with the Additional Blessings of *Health* and *Strength*, as they may be improv'd by *Art* and *Industry* to some useful End and Purpose, either of *Husbandry*, *Trade*, or other Sorts of *Callings*; so they imply a *Trust* too in the Management of them, in proportion to the Measures in which they are imparted, and to the just Expectations of their Almighty *Donor*, to whom they are to be answer'd, and accounted for.

How highly then are All concern'd, in their several Circumstances and Conditions of Life, to contribute their *Share* of the several Gifts to the Honour of *Him* that gave them, and to the Publick Good of that *Body*, whereof the Owners of them are *Members*? And how severe must be their *Reckoning*, if they pervert and misapply them to Ends quite *Different* from what their *Donor* design'd?

How *Ungrateful* must They be to their Almighty Benefactor even for the *Inferior* Rank and Measure of these Gifts, if they smother them in the Obscurities of *Sloth* and *Idleness*, confine them to the Inclosures of *Sordid Avarice*, and *Self-Interest*; or make them countenance the Trade of *Begging*, and getting their *Daily Bread*, by the Sweat and Toil of *Other Mens Brows*?

And

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And what a Load of *Impiety* do They add to this *Ingratitude*, who bury those *Nobler Talents*, I just before mention'd, in the Bowels of the *Earth*; in Idle and Impertinent *Amusements*, and --- *Diversions*, in pursuing Little, Trivial, and Sinister Designs; or (which is yet much worse) in *Wantonness*, and *Vice*, and a Power of doing *Mischief*, by propagating *Infidelity*, and *Irreligion* in the World? When they employ that *Wit* and *Knowledge* God gave them for his own *Glory*, in Profaning and Ridiculing his Sacred *Name* and *Word*; their Accuracy of *Reason* in Arguing him out of the Authority of his *Church* and *Kingdom*; and turn their Freedom of *Thinking* and *Judging* for Themselves into a *Libertinism* in Faith, as well as in Practice.

But I forbear pressing farther upon this Head. You, my *Brethren*, as you know *Better Things*; so I doubt not but You are so *Wise*, and so *Happy*, as to do them. The *Wealthy* Circumstances, which your own *Parts*, and your own *Industry*, have advanc'd most of you to, are an Evidence of your *Good Use* of the *Talents* God has given You; and your Appearing in this Place upon so *Honourable*, so *Religious*, so *Charitable* a Design, as this *Solemnity* supposes, takes off all the apparent Suspicion of your perverting them to *Bad Ones*.

I have but one thing more to offer, and then I have done; and that is, that as You

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employ your Other Gifts of *Nature* and *Grace*, so you would liberally employ those of your *Fortune* too, to the same Great Ends, the Publick Emoluments of *Religion* and *Society*.

Honour and *Riches* are the two main Branches of this Sort of Gifts, and they Both imply a *Stewardship* of considerable Importance. The Former supposes a *Power* and *Authority* in those that have it to do a great deal of Good to *Private* Persons, as well as *Publick* Communities, and they have a great deal to answer for, if they decline, or neglect it.

Honour is not given only to set Some Men above Others, to enable them to govern and keep the Rest in Awe under the Rod of their *Authority*; much less to Insult and Lord it over their *Inferiors*, to pervert *Judgment* for a *Reward*, or enrich themselves with *Bribes*: But for the better Maintenance of *Religion*, as well as the *Civil Rights*, to suppress and punish *Infidelity* and *Vice*, and to protect and encourage *Innocence* and *Vertue*; to defend the *Injur'd* and *Oppress'd*, and see that such as are in *Need*, and *Necessity*, have Right.

Nor are *Riches* a Talent much Inferior to that of *Honour*; nay in Some Sense they are Above it. They open a very Large and Noble Field of Action to the several Possessors of them, to render themselves highly and *Universally* Useful, and Beneficial to Mankind; there being scarce any *Wants*, any *Distresses*, any *Calamities* whatever, incident to *Humane* Nature; but what the Beneficence of
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the *Wealthy* may minister Relief to. They may be *Eyes to the Blind*, and *Feet to the Lamé*, *Fathers to the Fatherless*, and *Husbands to the Widows*. They have *Bread* to give to the *Hungry*, *Cloathing* to the *Naked*, *Education* to the *Ignorant*, and the *Subsistence* of a *Trade* to poor *Orphans* in *Distress*.

And the farther the *Extent* of this *Talent* reaches, the larger and more diffusive must the *Stewardship* of it be, the greater the *Fidelity* requir'd to discharge it; and the severer the *Account* to be demanded of it, if, instead of its being employ'd to these *Excellent Ends*, it be either hoarded up, and made *Unprofitable* to any but its *Owner*, or lavishly thrown away upon his *Vanity* and *Ambition*, his *Luxury*, or his *Lusts*.

How forcibly then should the *Thoughts* of these things move us to weigh duly our several *Stations* and *Circumstances* in the *World*, and proportion our *Works of Piety* and *Charity* according to them; to compare our *Abilities* with the *Objects* that are presented to our *View*, and generously close in with all *Opportunities* that offer of doing *Good* to Those that need it?

And what *Opportunity* more *Inviting*, what *Objects* more *Deserving*, than *These* now before us. The poor *Widows*, and the *Fatherless*, without any other *Relation*, than that of *Fellow-Christians*, have a *Title* to our *Charity*. They are of the *Household of Faith*, of which we are only *Stewards*, and have for
that

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that Reason an *Equitable Demand* upon Us for a *Supply* of their Wants.

How much more *Equitable*, how much more *Moving* must *Their Demands* be, who bear a *Nearer Relation* to Us, as the *Relicts* of our Fathers, and the *Issue* descended from them? We are of the same *Household*, the same *Parentage* by *Birth*, as well as *Profession*; And can a *Son* forget his *Mother*, or see his *Brethren* in Distress, and not feel the *Yearning*, the relenting, of his own *Bowels* towards them?

We cannot but be all sensible of the very *Small* and *Scanty* Subsistence, which the Greater Part of the *Clergy* have for the Support of their *Families*, and that too lessen'd by *Accidental Burthens* and *Expences* from *Abroad*. And if by *This* they are disabled from providing for those of their own *Household*, or are snatch'd perhaps out of the *World* before their *Circumstances* would allow them to raise a *Fund* for that purpose, does it not nearly concern Us, who are All of the same *Stock*, to supply that fore *Defect*, by contributing to the *Publick Fund*, that is design'd for their Use?

We have some of us perhaps experienc'd the same *Necessities* *Ourselves*, have had *Difficulties* to struggle with on account of the Like *Circumstances* in the *Families* we sprung from. And should not *This* engage Us, in a *Fellow-feeling* towards them, to lend our *Helping Hands* towards the raising Them
up

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up to the same Condition with *Ourselves*; that *They* also may be qualify'd to stretch out *Theirs*, in their Turns, to the Needy Offspring that come after them?

We profess to pay an Honour and Respect to the *Priesthood*, and to the *Memory* of our *Fathers* in it; and how can we better testify that Honour, how can we more effectually establish *Our Own*, than by enabling their *Posterity* to live with *Credit* in the World, and propagating that Reverence to their Character in *Our Age*, which they by their Good Works acquir'd in *Theirs*?

How can We otherwise do *Justice* to those Principles of *Piety* and *Charity* they instill'd, than by transmitting the *Effects* of them to their Succeeding Generations, and taking off that Reproach of *Poverty* in their *Descendents*, which is but too often reflected back upon the *Parents* Themselves?

This is what the Voice of *Reason*, as well as *Religion*, does so pressingly suggest, that I need urge it no farther, it speaks for itself. Let me only intreat you to apply these several Arguments, which the Thoughts of your own *Hearts* will naturally suggest in favour of this *Charity*, and reflect on the many *Noble*, nay *Royal*, *Examples*, that have led the Way to it; and then I need not doubt, but that the *Present Objects* of it will meet with a most Chearful, and Bountiful Contribution.

Especially, if You consider, Lastly, the Excellency of those *Rewards* it entitles you

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10. That as the *Faith*, and *Piety*, and *Charity* of your *Fathers*, who serv'd at *Christ's Altar*, deriv'd all those *Blessings* on You, whether *Spiritual*, or *Temporal*, which you have *hitherto* enjoy'd ; so the *Pious* and *Charitable Offerings* You now make in their *Name*, and for their *Sakes*, (thro' *Faith* in, and *Obedience* to the same *Blessed Lord*, whose *Stewards* You also are) will secure and perpetuate the *Continuance* of these *Blessings* to *Yourself*, and *Your Families*, both in this *Life*, and the *Next*.

You will not only have the *Blessings* of the *Fatherless*, and the *Widows*, and the *Blessings* of Those that *blest in Christ's Name* ; But above all, You will have the *Comfortable Testimony* of your own *Hearts* for the *Faithful Discharge* of your *Stewardship* here ; and whenever You are *dismiss'd* from it, (as we all shortly must) will be sure to find *GOD*, your *Saviour* and *Redeemer*, most ready to welcome, and receive you into his *Glory*.

